

NAIA-ADA



@NAIAADA



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Athletics Director

Small college athletics has many challenges, and one position which seems to address many of those are the need for an Athletics Academic Coordinator in every department. Essential needs exist in the onboarding of student-athletes, and this position seems to alleviate the struggles of processing recruits into full-time students for each institution. As a coach and athletics administrator there are constant calls and emails requesting appointments for prospective students in the areas of financial aid, enrollment services, housing, business office, athletics compliance, tutoring, and academic advising. The one stop shop model exists with the implementation of the Athletics Academic Coordinator (AAC).

Imagine having an individual within each athletics department that can visit with a recruit and family and answer all questions pertaining

to becoming a full-time student and participating in their respective sport. The idea is to develop a one

stop shop whereas coaches have complete access to all the questions they are receiving from their recruits and a simple communication message can put the AAC in touch with the prospective student during the day or after hours as needed. This position would have a complete understanding of the enrollment process for the institution and would walk the recruit and family through completion and then move on to each area needed. Within athletics there needs to be a common theme streamlined within the department, and if the AAC could be the person doing this then it alleviates any misinformation from being distributed.

The eligibility center or clearinghouse is a challenge in itself, however, having someone walk the student through the process or explain it in a simple phone call or face-to-face interaction bodes well for customer service and ensuring the task is completed on time. All too often we leave these steps up to the family and recruit assuming everyone understands phrases such as, "Create a profile," and, "Request transcripts via the portal." These phrases are intimidating to someone who has

never lived in the world of higher education. This is where the AAC provides the comfort of walking the recruit through the necessary steps of completing registration for eligibility and requesting the necessary information to receive a decision and preventing delays. The AAC would be the individual who would communicate with the eligibility center or the clearinghouse on behalf of each student if there is an issue with the student's accounts.

The AAC would provide academic advising depending on each sport's request for a block of practice times and would follow each athlete's academic progress and intervene with tutoring requests, academic support with professors, make-up exams, and all items needed for academic success. Most professors would rather have the academic conversation with someone who is vested in the academics of the student without regard to the impact the student has on their athletics program of choice. As one can tell, the AAC has a broad arena and must be knowledgeable with the onboarding process for their institution and also understand the needs of the athletics department.

NATYCAA



@NATYCAA2



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The age of digital ... everything!

Video boards. Live online broadcasts. Social media. Digital ticketing. Graphics. Website stories. Hype videos. Fundraising platforms. There seems to be a digital answer to all the work that we oversee as athletics directors. And we need to be open to change and new opportunities for our departments.

While at the two-year level we do not have the funding or staffing to compete with, let's say a four-year institution, there is still the ongoing race to have the best facilities, the best equipment, the best social media, the best videos - essentially the best of everything. When another school has a better online video broadcast in comparison to ours or better social media posts or even if it has a live DJ at its events, I definitely hear about it. And then we go back to see how we can better our product to be competitive.

But new technology is beneficial for our departments, and most should be welcomed. Technology

like self-operating cameras or one of the many digital ticketing platforms free up our staff's time and potentially reduce costs within an athletics department, while still providing a good digital experience. Gone are the days of counting endless amounts of cash or paying someone to operate a camera. Apps can create social media graphics, and game recaps and other website stories now have AI options within the website platform.

Technology allows for increased fan and recruit engagement with the athletics department controlling the narrative. Videos, graphics, contests, athletics contest results, inside looks into programs, and more are quickly available to them and allow them to feel that they are part of the team. This could ultimately build a fan for life, creating an experience that is different than normal marketing methods.

I also serve in a dean role at my institution, and there is a constant conversation about students using AI to complete assignments or other coursework. The fact of the matter is it exists, our students are using it, and at some point, we need to embrace it as being the new normal. But it does not have to stop there. AI can elicit more

discussions, more creativity, and more thoughtful learning in the classroom, but we must be willing to look outside the box and change how we operate.

Instead of fighting the direction that the world of athletics seems to be going, we should embrace the technology that is offered to better our athletics departments and benefit our student-athletes. We all want to give our employees, coaches, students, fans, and other stakeholders a good experience, and we want to feel good about the product that we are putting out. Advances in technology allow us to be able to do this in a more efficient manner and should be looked at positively more so than negatively.